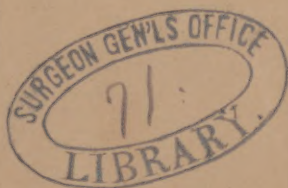
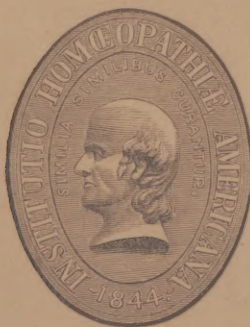


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A
BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE
MATERIA MEDICA.

BY SAMUEL BANCROFT BARLOW, M. D.,

Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the New York Homœopathic Medical College.



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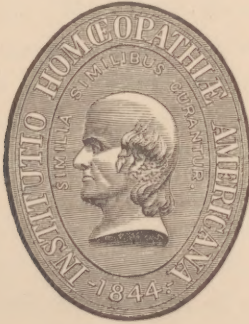
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A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE
HOMŒOPATHIC MATERIA MEDICA.

By S. B. BARLOW, M.D., OF NEW YORK.

THE Homœopathic Materia Medica now stands before the world peerless,—the noblest monument of human perseverance and discriminative skill which has as yet been permitted to cheer the heart of man. Having for its sole object the good—the highest, holiest good—of mortals, it may well lay most righteous claim to the highest commendation, if we may not say adoration, of the race, and challenge almost an equality in bounteous thanksgiving from mankind with that which is awarded to the system of moral healing, designed to elevate man from the ruin and degradation of sin, and place him on a plane “a little lower than the angels.” Although yet in its infancy, and measuring its existence by a few decades of years,—a period only equal to the common allotment of human life,—it has already attained a growth, a perfection, and a usefulness which might well put to shame the panegyrists and apologists of the preceding schools, hoary with antiquity, but which are merely the shapeless, arbitrary, ill-assorted and cumbrous accumulations of many centuries. Homœopathy is in all its youthful freshness and growing vigor. It is based on a law of Nature, as old as Nature herself, and which will be as lasting. It can, with all propriety, boast of a symmetry in its growing perfections, and a power for good from its adaptation for the relief of suffering

humanity, which could not be predicated of any other system or collection of the appliances of the healing art, without mockery and absurdity. Already can it display an *apparatus medicaninum*, founded on an unswerving and unalterable law of matter, and able to lay just claim to immortality.

Time, which ever has displaced, and ever will displace, arbitrary systems, will never be able to abrogate or overturn this. It is based deep down upon everlasting foundations, and will remain as long as disease, the manifestation of violated laws of health, shall be found upon the earth: nay, it will usher in the glad day when pain, sickness, and death shall be banished from this fair heritage of God.

In 1786, Samuel Hahnemann, a true seer, discovered the connection between the pathopoietic and the therapeutic action of drugs upon the human body. Thus he laid the foundation of a method of curing disease, as simple and as efficacious as it is safe, pleasant, and beneficent. For the first time in the lengthened course of centuries was the old, insecure, and often dangerous and hurtful Galenic method replaced by one of a beneficence, safety, and efficacy which will ever be the theme of praise of mankind.

In 1790, Hahnemann first promulgated to the world the discovery which he had made in 1786. As a result of this publication by the master physician of the eighteenth century, the world of medicine was moved to its centre; the good were struck with awe and admiration; the bad with astonishment, culminating in opposition, detraction, and persecution. The good man was unmoved by the clamors and persecutions of his brethren, and went forward by the command of the Divinity within him, enlarging his views, perfecting his beneficent improvements; securing converts, friends, and collaborators in the noble enterprise of disenthraling his race from the shackles of a tyranny which had held the medical world in uninterrupted and almost unquestioned sway for twenty-five centuries. He

was unmindful of toil, of suffering, of opposition, of calumny, and of ignominy at the hands of his professional brethren, if so he might press forward to the finishing of his task,—a task which was to enroll his name with mankind's greatest benefactors, and which, in his own day, was to disarm all the most dreaded and fatal diseases of half their malignity and terror, and ultimately to prepare mankind for measurable exemption from disease and suffering.

In all these labors of love, the noble band of friends who gathered around him, converts to his doctrines, whom he had electrified with the holy fire of his genius, were greatly useful in carrying forward the provings of drugs upon the healthy. The names of Boëninghausen, Stapf, Noack, Trinks, Hartmann, Rückert, Hering, Kurtz, Haynel, Roth, Schroen, Attomyr, Müller, Mayerhofer, Griesselich, Gross, and many others, will ever be remembered with honor and gratitude; while their provings stand as monuments of their perseverance, and furnish models which have not, as yet, been surpassed in excellence, and peradventure never will be.

In 1801, Hahnemann published a work on the efficacy of small doses of medicine, and of Belladonna in particular. The minute dose of the truly homœopathic drug is a necessary corollary from the fact that like cures like, and that the sick organism has its susceptibilities greatly exalted toward all agencies and instrumentalities possessing the attribute of similarity to the morbid cause. The question of the dose can never be settled by dogmatism so long as a multitude of causes are operating in human bodies to render some more and others less susceptible to drug action. Those causes and their resultant differences, call them constitutional, idiosyncratic, or by whatever other name you please, must remain, as long as man remains either a transient or permanent *nidus* for *miasmata* of a personal or of a more general origin. We can never too much admire the acuteness of genius which led Hahnemann thus early,

and, as it were, at the very initiatory period of his greatest of all medical discoveries, to apprehend the corollary of the smallest doses being able to cure diseases.

In 1805, he published an essay on a new system of medicine, based upon pure experience; and, about the same time, another and very learned disquisition upon the utter, palpable, fundamental, and radical insufficiency of all precedent systems. These two last named publications were entirely unanswerable, and were mighty helps in preparing the European mind for the reception of a system which now begun to show that it was destined to revolutionize the world of medicine, and ultimately to become universal.

This same year, 1805, was signalized as an era in Hahnemann's life, by the publication at Leipzig of his "*Fragmenta de Viribus Medicamentorum Positivis, sive in sano corpore humano observatis.*" This may be called the first work really pertaining to a new and truly rational materia medica which the world had then been permitted to see. It was a most worthy commencement of a labor which, however much derided then by interested bigots, charlatans, and knaves, now stands a monument worthy of the admiration of the scientific world.

In 1810, Hahnemann gave to the world his New Organon of the Healing Art, the very grammar of rational medicine,—a gospel which the sophistry and the malice of all the opposers of homœopathy have never been able to invalidate, a foundation of which not even one stone can be loosened.

The great work—the immortal conception of a gigantic mind—was now to be ushered in for the benefit of earth's millions in all future ages. I allude, of course, to the *Materia Medica Pura* of Hahnemann, in six volumes, the publication of which was commenced in 1811, and completed in 1820. Incomplete in its first issue, of course,—for the provings (*probata*) which were to complement its deficiencies were still being carried on by Hahnemann and his friends and co-workers, both in the profes-

sion and among the laity, — yet, even in its incomplete condition, it evinced a skill and order of arrangement which filled and satisfied the demands of science, as they were urged in favor of the new *methodus medendi*.

The Vienna provers executed some really able scientific work in the way of provings of new drugs and re-provings of old ones. Some of them were truly exhaustive, and will stand as models for all future time. They will ever be regarded as monuments of the skill, the perseverance, and earnestness of those true and self-devoted men. Their labors were recorded in Stapf's *Archiv*, from 1822 to 1840, or even later. A proving of Thuja, made by the Vienna physicians, was a truly Herculean work, which developed powers and capabilities in that drug of which the heart of man could never before have conceived. All honor to those glorious creators of medical knowledge the elements of which had lain hidden from the foundation of the world!

In 1830, Dr. Wesselhoeft practised *in modo Hahnemanni*, among the Moravian brethren in Pennsylvania, and was instrumental in instituting a homœopathic association which bore the title of "The Northampton Homœopathic Society." Up to that time, and to about 1836 or 1838, there were no books of note on the science of homœopathy in the English language, and the students of the system were obliged to go to the German for what they wished to learn of its value and uses; and, as to most Americans that language was unfamiliar, the study was truly "a pursuit of knowledge under difficulties." Some few mastered the German sufficiently to enable them to consult the *Materia Medica Pura* in that language, while others used what could be found on the subject in the French language; many more had not been able to make progress in "the new Gospel of Healing," until the *Organon* and *Jahr's Manual* were published in English, which was done about this period.

This is the proper place to mention the work of Dr. Hering

on Serpent Poisons, which was published in 1834, entitled, "*Wirkungen des Schlangengiftes*," a work which embraces an amount of information on a most interesting subject for which the profession will be ever thankful. His proving of Lachesis has furnished the profession with one of the most potent remedies we possess; and the frequent use of this article for more than thirty years past has fully confirmed in my mind the fact, that that proving was an exhaustive and most reliable one. It has often been found adapted to symptoms and groups for which, without it, I could have found no reliable remedy. Great honor is certainly due to Dr. Hering for his many and valuable contributions to the *Materia Medica* of our school.

On May 27th, 1835, at a meeting of homœopathic physicians at Allentown, Pa., it was resolved to have a hospital and school of homœopathy. In pursuance of that resolution, "The National Academy of Homœopathy" was chartered by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, February 25, 1836, and Dr. Constantine Hering, a pioneer of homœopathy in America,—having arrived in this country, at Philadelphia, about the year 1833,—was elected its first President.

The fruits of this enterprise were soon seen; for in 1836, was issued from the Academy press in Allentown the first American edition of the *Organon* in English, from the British translation of the fourth German, with improvements from the fifth German edition. In the same year, 1836, was also published, "G. H. G. Jahr's Manual of Homœopathic Medicine; translated from the German, with improvements and additions, by C. Hering, M.D., in two volumes: Allentown, Pa., at the Academical Book Store, 1836."

The nearly simultaneous appearance of these two most indispensable works in the English tongue was a perfect God-send to such American physicians as were unable to read them in German, and gave an impetus to the study, adoption, and practice of homœopathy, which could not be resisted. The old,

proud, haughty, dominant school of medicine was surprised. Many physicians soon adopted "the new medicine," whilst many more wearied themselves and all their friends in fruitless endeavors to overthrow it by arguments, or by endeavors to hoodwink and deceive their fellow-citizens by stupendous mendacity. Those efforts to disparage the new science met with signal failure. The new system grew and spread and strengthened itself by patient, honorable development, going on from year to year, increasing in the popular favor, until it has become a power in the world. All honor to the noble spirit which animated the Academic corporation at Allentown, and gave to Americans the much-needed facilities for the acquisition of the knowledge of a rational system of medicine!

Soon, in 1838, followed a "Repertorium," of "G. H. G. Jahr's Manual of Homœopathic Medicine; translated from the German, by authority of the North American Academy of the Homœopathic Healing Art: with an Introduction and some additions, by C. Hering, M.D., Allentown, at the Academical Book Store, 1838." This was a noble offering in aid of the American practitioner, — such an aid indeed as those can never sufficiently appreciate who enter the ranks of homœopathy at any period since the issue of that work. The physicians of those days supposed they had reached the *ne plus ultra* in the way of a guide, and scarcely permitted themselves to wish or to hope for any greater. By its help, it was now quite feasible for the earnest student to select remedies by the strict rules of art for the majority of his cases.

But the American mind, ever more active, persevering, and inventive than that of other countries, rested not until Jahr's Manual, under the editorial hand of the late much-lamented Hull, was issued from the New York press in two volumes, 8vo, in 1841 and 1842. This was the crowning glory of the literature of homœopathic medicine in America. Although it is not without imperfections, it will hardly be denied that the aspira-

tions of eager learners scarcely dared to desire or to conceive of anything superior to those magical volumes.

Since that period, however, the literature of homœopathy has increased with such a flood-like rapidity, that the most studious among us have hardly been able to keep pace in their reading with the issues from the press. Although this literature embraces works in all the departments of homœopathy, yet that of *materia medica* can fairly boast of its full share. Since 1842, Hull's *Jahr's Manual* has passed through many editions, with notes, emendations, improvements, additions, corrections, etc., by a considerable number of editors; and, notwithstanding the frequent issue of elaborate and costly works on the *materia medica*, all of which have much and peculiar merit, this cannot fail to be and remain one of the most cherished of the standard works of reference to the homœopathic practitioner, perhaps for decades or centuries to come.

The *Materia Medica* of Teste, though never completed, has points of excellence which were not found in such as preceded it; and if some able hand shall ever perform the pious duty of supplementing and completing the work of Teste, his labors will be blessed to the latest generations.

The *Symptomen Codex* of Jahr is an immense storehouse of symptomatology, with not an inconsiderable amount of physiological and pathological information which will forever endear it to the student and the practitioner.

I should do injustice were I to omit the most honorable mention of Hempel's *Lectures on the Materia Medica*,—a work conceived in a truly scientific spirit, and carried out with an ability which does its truly devoted author immense credit as a cultivator of a scientific field which is too apt to be found sterile and uninteresting. He has the rare merit of having treated the study of *materia medica* in such a manner as will ever render his book one of the most truly welcome works on this science, which has as yet appeared in this or any other land.

In 1846, a little band of workers, under the guidance of the late Benjamin F. Joslin, M.D., of New York, made a proving of *Rhus radicans*, which was so far complete as to enable the profession to avail themselves of its useful properties in a multitude of cases. The scientific arrangement of the material thus obtained was performed by Dr. Joslin in that careful and precise manner which was characteristic of him. His mind was of that accurate, methodical, and mathematical order which would insure the greatest completeness and usefulness in the work. He was trained and schooled in studies calculated to insure the most critical accuracy in whatever scientific labors he might be called to perform.

A large number of provings of various extent and merit, from those of a slight and imperfect character up to such as are complete and exhaustive, are to be found in the various reviews, journals, and other periodical publications devoted to the interests of our schools. In many instances, even short and fragmentary provings have given valuable hints and aids in the treatment of a wide range of morbid affections. A case in point occurs at this moment to my mind; viz., the proving of *Cactus grandiflorus*, by Dr. Rubini, of Italy. Many similar cases have been scattered through the journals for many years.

For two decades of years past, the physicians of America have contributed their full share to the improvement of our *materia medica*. This fact is worthy of honorable mention, at least, when it is considered that ours is a new country, and that but little more than one-third of a century has elapsed since the introduction of homœopathy in America.

The New Provings of Prof. Hale possess many points of merit and seem destined to become a favorite with the profession; yet I have found it not a light task to teach the student and young practitioner how to use in a truly homœopathic mode the facts and information with which the work is crowded. Doubtless its industrious and ingenious compiler will so im-

prove its future editions, which are certain to be demanded, as to render it a work absolutely necessary to the physician, and the ground of a fame sufficient to satisfy the desires of the most ardent ambition. Since the above was written, a second edition has been published, much enlarged in matter and not less improved in manner.

The very elaborate, accurate, and costly works of Professors Lippe and Gross, both of which are designed to facilitate the acquisition of a truly accurate diagnostic of the *materia medica*, though well conceived, are yet, in some material respects, imperfect. They fall much short of that degree of usefulness which their authors intended them to reach: still they do unspeakable honor to their authors, and will soon be found indispensable helps to the student, even if he has possessed himself of most of what has worthily preceded them. Both these works may reasonably lay claim to the honor of being the most truly philosophical treatises which have, as yet, ever issued from the press, in any age or any country, upon a subject so difficult, intricate, critical, and abstruse as the attempt to simplify and systematize the wayward, multitudinous symptomatology of our *materia medica*.

In 1849, there was published in French, a 12mo volume of 150 pages or more of provings by members of our School in Brazil. In 1854, it was published in Spanish. The same work was again published in an English dress in New York, in 1859. It is every way a creditable production, both in its scientific contents and in its manner of handling or arrangement. Many of the articles of which the pathogenesis is there given are really of great power and value. So the work forms a valuable contribution to our store of knowledge.

In 1853, the American Institute of Homœopathy published, at Philadelphia, a volume of 300 pages, 12mo, of American provings of a reliable character. It is well arranged, is a val-

uable contribution to the literature of our materia medica, and has been of great use to the profession.

Richard Hughes, M.D., has written a work on the *Materia Medica*, in two volumes, the first of which was published in London, by Turner & Co., during 1867. It gives promise of rare usefulness to the student and young practitioner. It is written in a style so simple and pleasing that it must inevitably become a favorite with all classes of the fraternity of homœopathsists. I know no work in our homœopathic literature so calculated to obtain a universal popularity as this. Students will read it with such a zest as is manifested by the young, in reading Robinson Crusoe, or Gulliver's Travels.*

The great and pressing want with us now is some new and improved mode, better than any hitherto made known to us for studying the materia medica,—a method which shall render the acquisition of a competent knowledge of it, for practical purposes, more facile and less laborious and irksome than any hitherto practised. Very many plans and methods have been from time to time devised and promulgated, some of which were really ingenious and useful; still, a better plan is yet a desideratum. Knowing well the character of the American mind, I deem it not too much to hope that some ingenious and fortunate individual will yet strike out some complete and effective method which shall confer immortality upon his name, and procure for him the benedictions of all homœopathsists. We may possibly see this before many years. We cannot know who the fortunate discoverer is to be, but the prize thus to be won ought to stimulate the inventive genius of every true lover of the science, until the result is reached.

In the bright future, when years and centuries and ages shall

* The work of Dr. Hughes (1st vol.) has been reprinted by Mr. Radde, of New York, with the addition of a full and complete index, which was a desideratum not found in the English edition.

have lapsed; when better governments and better laws shall have succeeded to those under which we now too often suffer; when the laws of health shall have become perfectly understood, and their adoption and observance shall have become the rule, as now they are the exception; when all the cognate branches of the science of medicine shall have been improved to their acme of possible perfection; when, as a consequence of the better condition of the physical man, his mental and moral status shall have evinced an approximation toward the angelic state, — what may we not expect from our ever-growing, ever-perfecting *materia medica*? What, but the rescuing of the race of man from most of the moral and physical evils which now seem his inheritance, and which now beset him with such demoniac malignity? What, but the reproduction of the Golden Age, when the lives of men shall be measured by centuries, as now by decades and lustrals; when sages and seers and poets and prophets shall sing the happiness of the race in Arcadian vales; and man, regenerated and rejuvenated, once more enjoy the felicities and glories of the primeval age!

POSTSCRIPT.

I have not the vanity to think for a moment that the estimate I have made in the preceding essay of the value of the labors of the several persons of whom I have there spoken will be universally, even if generally, approved. I am too painfully aware that there are some who are disposed to depreciate the labors of all our writers; to belittle the efforts and productions of such men as Hering, Hull, Lippe, Gross, Hempel, Hale, and many others in our own country, to say nothing of European authors. But believing, as I do, that all the writers named, and many others, had no other wish than to promote the sacred cause of homœopathy by their labors, I am bound to accept the results for what they were intended, however short they may have fallen of the mark; and, although much of what we have from our best writers is necessarily imperfect, yet it is all worthy of honorable mention.

As it is not in my nature to "damn with faint praise," all I can say is that the estimate I have given of the men spoken of and of their labor is my own,—given to please no one but myself. Neither do I desire to displease any one. The value I have expressed as attaching to the work of any and all men is such as I believe will be found ultimately to be sanctioned by time and experience which are ever "the great touchstone" of truth, when applied to the labors of mortals. S. B. B.

55 East Twenty-first Street, }
New York, June 1, 1868. }



